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Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Program Director
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Higher Education and Employment
Advancement Committee

Thursday, February 19, 2009

Written testimony supporting:

- Proposed House Bill 5427, An Act Concerning Green Manufacturing Programs And The Production Of Environmentally Preferred Products
- Proposed House Bill 5488, An Act Concerning Training For Green Jobs
- Proposed House Bill 5975, An Act Concerning Training For Green Industries

Representative Willis, Senator Handley, and members of the Committee:

Environment Connecticut submits this testimony supporting Proposed House Bills 5427, 5488, and 5975.

We support the goal of these proposals to create effective "green job" training programs in Connecticut. Investment in clean energy and green jobs is one of the surest paths towards economic recovery and job creation for our state.

Clean energy and energy efficiency industries create jobs at all levels of the economy. Connecticut's ratepayer-supported Clean Energy Fund and Conservation and Load Management Funds are investing in "green" job-creating technologies today. Not only are these investments reducing our state's emissions of global warming pollutants, but they are creating well-paying local jobs. Solar power, for example, creates jobs in research and design, manufacturing, installation, and support of solar power systems. 75% of the jobs associated with solar photovoltaic industries are inherently local jobs tied to installation, support and maintenance. By focusing on programs that train workers for such industries, Connecticut is investing in jobs that can help revitalize our communities and put residents of our state back to work.

Connecticut has adopted PA #08-98 which mandates cuts in our state's emissions of global warming pollutants. This year, the congress will take up similar legislation at the national level. By training a workforce with the skills to support clean energy and energy efficiency industries, Connecticut can be well prepared to meet the challenge of cutting global warming pollution across all sectors of our economy while simultaneously creating jobs and long-term economic growth.

Environment Connecticut urges the committee to approve legislation establishing state green job training programs that serve the needs of college students, trades people, and displaced workers who need to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in the clean energy industries of the 21st century.

Such programs need not be limited to, or offered exclusively within the state college and university system. There are significant opportunities to forge partnerships between state higher education institutions and private not for profit organizations to create innovative green job training programs that reach diverse populations statewide. A recent Wall Street Journal article about one such example in Los Angeles, CA that is training workers for jobs in the solar power industry is available here:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123457326090086555.html>

Finally, I would like to encourage the committee to look for opportunities to create strong linkages between green job training programs that connect 4-year institutions to 2-year community colleges, to high schools. I am also the Chairman of the Portland, CT Board of Education. Our school system recently introduced the Project Lead The Way pre-engineering curriculum at Portland Middle and High School. The student interest in this curriculum has been strong, with much of the student's focus being on "green" technologies. Connecticut could benefit greatly from linking educational opportunities in this area from middle school all the way through college.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Program Director
Environment Connecticut